

Message Text

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ACTION AID-59

INFO OCT-01 EA-10 NEA-11 IO-13 ISO-00 HA-05 EB-08
AGRE-00 COME-00 TRSE-00 FDRE-00 DODE-00 CIAE-00
SP-02 PA-01 ICAE-00 CA-01 PM-05 SS-15 INR-10
NSAE-00 L-03 NSCE-00 SSO-00 INRE-00 /144 W
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O P 301223Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY DACCA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9510
INFO AMEMBASSY RANGOON PRIORITY
USMISSION GENEVA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY ROME PRIORITY

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DEPT PASS ALSO AID/ASIA, AID/OFDA
ROME FOR FODAG

E.O. 11652: NA DECLASSIFY DEC 31, 1979
TAGS: PBOR PINT EAID BG BM
SUBJECT: ARAKANESE MUSLIMS - BDG BRIEFING

REF: STATE 135360

SUMMARY: AMBASSADOR AND USAID DIRECTOR ATTENDED MAY 29
BRIEFING BY FOREIGN AFFAIRS ADVISOR SHAMSUL HUQ ON ARAKANESE
MUSLIM SITUATION. HUQ ANNOUNCED FOREIGN SECRETARY LEAVING
JUNE 6 FOR RANGOON TO QUOTE RESOLVE PROBLEMS UNQUOTE.
MEANWHILE, HUQ ASKED FOR ASSISTANCE AND INVITED FOREIGN
MISSIONS TO VISIT CAMP SITES. US MISSION RECOMMENDS INITIAL
RESPONSE TO UNHCR OF ONE MILLION DOLLARS IN ASSISTANCE. HALF
OF THIS FOR FOOD COMMODITIES AND THE OTHER HALF IN CASH TO
PROCURE LOCALLY AVAILABLE ITEMS. END SUMMARY.

1. FOREIGN AFFAIRS ADVISOR HUQ AND UN RESIDENT REPRESENTATIVE
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ZAGORIN BRIEFED CHIEFS OF DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS MAY 29. HUQ
REVIEWED BDG VERSION OF DIPLOMATIC EXCHANGES WITH RANGOON
ON ARAKANESE MUSLIM ISSUE AND SAID HE HOPED THAT UPCOMING TRIP
OF FOREIGN SECRETARY TABARAK HUSSAIN JUNE 6 TO RANGOON WOULD
LEAD TO REPATRIATION OF 150,000 ARAKANESE MUSLIMS WHO CROSSED
THE BURMESE BORDER. TOGETHER WITH DEAN OF DIPLOMATIC CORPS
HE INVITED FOREIGN MISSIONS TO VISIT CAMP SITES TO SEE PROBLEMS

FIRST HAND. ZAGORIN INDICATED UNHCR APPEAL WOULD BE SENT TO UN MEMBER COUNTRIES "NEXT FEW DAYS" AT THE REQUEST OF BDG, WHICH NO LONGER IS ABLE FROM ITS OWN RESOURCES TO MEET THE COST BURDEN OF THE REFUGEES. UNHCR IS DETAILING A FEW OFFICERS TO BANGLADESH TO ASSIST ZAGORIN IN THE COORDINATION OF INTERNATIONAL RELIEF ACTIVITIES. BDG INDICATED STRONG PREFERENCE FOR FUNNELING OF ASSISTANCE THROUGH UN AGENCIES. ZAGORIN ESTIMATED SIX MONTH COST OF RELIEF OPERATIONS TO BE BETWEEN DOLS 15 MILLION AND DOLS 16 MILLION. OF THIS AMOUNT DOLS 2.2 MILLION HE SAID HAS ALREADY BEEN ALLOCATED BY UN AGENCIES.

2. IN USAID MEETING WITH UNHCR AND WFP OFFICIALS IN DACCA, WE WERE TOLD THAT UN COST ESTIMATES BASED ON ESTIMATED CAMP POPULATION OF 200,000 REFUGEES THROUGH DECEMBER 30. A CONTINGENCY RESERVE OF DOLS 650,000 IS ALSO INCLUDED. THERE SEEM TO BE CONFLICTING REPORTS ON THE NUMBERS OF ARAKANESE MUSLIMS IN THE CAMPS. FIGURES RANGE FROM 120,00 TO 190,000, AS NOTED IN THE PRESS. THE DISPARITY RESTS IN PART ON NUMBERS REGISTERED AS OPPOSED TO ESTIMATES OF THOSE AWAITING REGISTRATION, AND THOSE WHO CROSSED THE BORDER WHO HAVE MOVED OUT OF THE CAMP SITES.

3. IN CONVERSATIONS WITH WORLD FOOD PROGRAM REPRESENTATIVE TREVOR PAGE MAY 29, PAGE SAID HIS FIELD MAN AT CAMP SITE ESTIMATES THAT HALF OF THE 250 DEATHS MAY BE ATTRIBUTED TO MALNUTRITION. THE AVERAGE RATION DISTRIBUTED IN SOME CAMPS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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HAS BEEN DOWN TO 200 GRAMS PER DAY RATHER THAN THE NECESSARY 400 GRAMS PER DAY. THESE PROBLEMS RELATE TO LOGISTICS, DISTRIBUTION, AND OTHER MANAGEMENT ISSUES, RATHER THAN LACK OF FOOD IN COUNTRY.

4. WE PLAN TO SEND USAID DISASTER ASSISTANCE OFFICER TO CAMP SITES MAY 31 FOR DETAILED REVIEW. HOWEVER, ON BASIS OF DISCUSSIONS WITH UN AND BDG AGENCIES, WE FEEL THE INITIAL US RESPONSE COULD INCLUDE 2,000 METRIC TONS OF SOY FORTIFIED SORGHUM GRITS (SFSG). BASED ON LATEST AVAILABLE DATA HERE THE COST OF SFSG IS DOLS 175 PER METRIC TON PLUS DOLS 80 PER METRIC TON TRANSPORTATION COST. THIS WOULD BRING TOTAL COST TO DOLS 510,000. WHILE PRESS RELEASE COULD INCLUDE A US PLEDGE TO UNHCR, WE ENVISION WORKING OUT A DIRECT RELATIONSHIP ON THIS WITH WFP IN ORDER TO ASSURE ACCOUNTABILITY.

5. IN ADDITION TO FOODGRAIN SUPPORT WE RECOMMEND A CASH CONTRIBUTION OF ROUGHLY DOLS 490,000 TO UNHCR TO PURCHASE COMMODITIES AVAILABLE LOCALLY LIKE SULT, SUGAR, TEA, CLOTHING, BLANKETS, BAMBOO RODS FOR SHELTER, SANITATION EQUIPMENT, ETC. AGAIN, WE WOULD WISH TO WORK OUT WITH THE UNHCR AND UN AGENCIES CONCERNED THE SPECIFIC ALLOCATION OF FUNDS TO ENSURE RESOURCES

ARE SPENT FOR COMMODITIES WHICH ARE TURNED OVER TO CAMP OPERATIONS. WE BELIEVE THAT WITH THIS SYSTEM WE WOULD BE ABLE TO ESTABLISH ACCOUNTABILITY AT LEAST THROUGH ACTUAL ALLOCATION OF COMMODITIES TO CAMPS.

6. WITH RESPECT TO PARA 1, REFTTEL, WE WOULD RECOMMEND THAT US ASSISTANCE BE FUNNELED THROUGH UN AND NOT SPLIT WITH LEAGUE OF INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS SOCIETIES. IT IS CLEAR DESIRE OF BDG THAT UNHCR "COORDINATE" RELIEF.

7. IN REGARD TO TIME OVER WHICH RELIEF MAY BE NECESSARY, UNHCR HAS ARBITRARILY SELECTED SIX MONTHS. BDG RELUCTANTLY ACCEPTS THIS FOR PLANNING PURPOSES WHILE SAYING THAT THEY PREFER THE SHORTEST POSSIBLE TIME FOR RESOLUTION OF THE PROBLEM.
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WE BELIEVE IT BEST THAT THE USG AT PRESENT THINK IN TERMS OF IMMEDIATE NEEDS AND MAKE AN EARLY CONTRIBUTION OF ONE MILLION. WE WILL KEEP ADDITIONAL NEEDS UNDER REVIEW AND MAKE ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS AS NECESARY. WE ARE DOUBTFUL THAT KEEPING ARAKANESE MUSLIMS IN PRESENT CAMP SITES IS A DESIRABLE LONG TERM SOLUTION TO WHAT MAY BE AN EXTENDED PROBLEM. RATHER THAN CONTRIBUTE TO A NEW SEMI-PALESTINIAN REFUGEE POSSIBILITY WE SEE US ASSISTANCE BEING GIVEN FOR LIMITED TIME FRAME TO ENCOURAGE RESETTLEMENT OF PERSONS IN OTHER AREAS.

8. WE WOULD LIKE TO BE ABLE TO ANNOUNCE U.S. ASSISTANCE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE FOLLOWING RECEIPT OF UNHCR APPEAL.
SCHNEIDER

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